

BOOK REVIEW

The Savage Garden: Cultivating Carnivorous Plants by Peter D'Amato. 1998. xxii + 314 pp. more than 200 photographs and illustrations, most in color. ISBN 0-89815-915-6 \$19.95 (paperback). Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA.

Carnivorous plants, a group of about 500 species and numerous cultivars, have captivated botanists, horticulturalists, and students of all ages since Darwin (1875) wrote one of the earliest books on the group. The more easily grown species and those locally abundant in boggy areas have been widely employed by teachers to stimulate interest in young students in plant biology and ecology. Unfortunately, until recently, little information has been available in book form in public and college libraries for teachers and students who want to know more about growing these plants. In recent years, three books with a worldwide scope have been published and widely distributed: Pietropaolo and Pietropaolo (1986), Lecoufle (1989, in translation), and Cheers (1992). These three works cover some of the same ground as the earlier and excellent books by Slack (1980, 1988) which are difficult to obtain.

Peter D'Amato's book surpasses these earlier works in the sheer volume of cultivation information and lore provided for individual species and cultivars. It is based on Peter's many years of experience with growing these plants; of selling them through his greenhouse, mail order and Internet nursery, California Carnivores; and of making numerous presentations at schools, hobbyist meetings, and on television. His goal, as he described it during a talk at the first meeting of the International Carnivorous Plant Society in Atlanta in 1997, was to popularize the plants and show how they can be grown in a wide variety of ways indoors and out. The range of creative, and sometimes whimsical, ways to grow these plants, well illustrated and described in the book, is its strongest feature. Since the book covers species worldwide, it also provides a starting point for exploring plant diversity and plant geography. The amazing radiation of *Drosera* species in Australia, and the narrowly restricted endemic genera *Darlingtonia*, *Heliamphora*, and *Cephalotus* which use trapping mechanisms similar to *Sarracenia* and *Nepenthes* are good examples.

A few minor faults should be noted. Many of the color photographs are small, but this allows for more text to flow around the figures creating a tighter integration of the two. On the other hand, this design foregoes including any large *in situ* shots such as those in Schnell's (1976) *Carnivorous Plants of the United States and Canada* or Clarke's (1997) truly stunning book on the *Nepenthes* of Borneo. As noted in the review published in the September (1998) issue of the *Carnivorous Plant Newsletter*, there are some spelling errors and some of the cultivars listed are not well documented in the literature. Readers interested in an overview of the unique physiological and ultrastructural features of carnivorous plants may wish to supplement this book with the earlier work by Juniper et al. (1989). Some of the guidelines presented for growing individual species may be less effective outside the northern California climate where the author lives. Apparently, no hardcover edition is available.

Overall, the well named *Savage Garden* is a bargain for the wealth of information it contains. As a CP enthusiast, I use it often. It may well achieve "bible" status for growers of these plants, especially as tissue culture (described in the first Appendix by expert Rob Gagliardo) makes more species available to the general public. I would recommend this book for all libraries, and to botanists and horticulturalists as a one-book gateway to knowing more about these fascinating plants.

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—DAVID LANE, Biological Sciences Library, Kendall Hall, University of New Hampshire, 129 Main St., Durham, NH 03824-3590.